



Date: 3/6/2014

From: Gulf Coast Broadband

To: Federal Communications Commission Staff

Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Trials, Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Staff,

We learned about this program yesterday and we are excited about the potential it represents to continue serving and expanding internet and telephone service to our rural customers in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. Due to our short timeline to prepare this Expression of Interest we will not be able to provide some census data, but would be willing to provide that information at a time you would prescribe.

Background

Gulf Coast Broadband is a privately owned business located in Morgan City, Louisiana and serves multiple areas in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. We were operational late in 2007 and served customers primarily in Morgan City. St. Mary has Highway 90 running east to west through the Parish where most of the towns are located. These towns have access to Cable and DSL, however if you live outside of the municipal limits the only available option is satellite. The other defining characteristic is Bayou Teche which also runs the length of the Parish west to east. Businesses and residents on the east side of Bayou Teche do not have access to cable or DSL. Consumer demand directed us to expand into these underserved areas and our company began to grow. We have contracted to increase our bandwidth to a Gigabyte circuit to satisfy the increasing demand in the rural areas outside of the towns along Highway 90. Approximately 30% of St. Mary Parish is not served with High Speed Broadband. Two years ago we stood a tower at the Port of West St. Mary, an important Industrial Park serving the oil and gas industry as well as ship building. Before our arrival at the Port of West St. Mary the businesses were operating with satellite internet, which is notoriously undependable, with some paying as much as \$50.00 per day. Our rural residential customers are thrilled to not be forced to drive to a family member or friend in town so their children can do their homework. We have a number of our residential customers who are now using their High Speed Internet to operate home-based businesses. Currently, we are covering roughly 50% of the rural area in the Parish and are receiving calls daily to expand our footprint.

Our main distribution tower is located on land owned by Oceaneering International; they recently notified us that they are terminating our lease as of November 2014 due to expansion of their facility in Morgan City. We will need to stand another tower to provide a seamless transition for our customers which will necessitate the purchase and erection of a 375 foot tower on another location.

Geographic Territory

St. Mary Parish is located in south Louisiana along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. It is a rural area dominated by oil and gas support industries and sugarcane farming. St. Mary is 1,119.4 square miles with 50.4% water. The population according to the 2010 census is 54,650 people and about 70% of the population is located in small towns along Highway 90 that runs east to west through the Parish. The other 30% are distributed fairly evenly throughout the rest of the Parish. Please see attached maps.

Towns and Cities

Baldwin	2,436
Berwick	4,946
Franklin	7,660
Morgan City	12,404
Patterson	6,112

Census-Designated Place

Amelia
Bayou Vista
Charenton
Glencoe
Siracusaville
Sorrel

List of Anchor Institutions

Most schools and government offices are located in the towns that are served by cable companies. The St. Mary Parish Schools have a contract with a company that has an E-rate designation. We have been encouraged by our Parish Schools to get E-rate so they can do business with a local company. We do have a working relationship with Water Districts in Amelia, Bayou Vista, Franklin and Baldwin. We are located on their water towers and trade internet connectivity for space on their towers. In addition, we are working with a drainage district providing internet connectivity, video surveillance and water flow metrics sent back to the Director of Operations. We have begun discussions with the City of Franklin to provide internet and telephone at the conclusion of their contract with Cox Cable. Our ultimate goal is to create a network which will have the capability and stability to provide interoperability via internet and telephone services to the municipalities for use during natural disasters.

Proposed Technology

Currently, the network is comprised of 17 towers/water towers across St. Mary Parish connected with point-to-point backhauls using the unlicensed 5 GHz frequency. We run an OSPF network where each tower has its own router and subnet to hand out to the customers. We transmit our 2.4 GHz, 900 MHz, and 5 GHz signal from these towers to homes and businesses in the surrounding area.

We propose to stand an additional 8 towers to increase our footprint in the unserved areas of the Parish. In addition, we propose to change the backhauls to a licensed frequency. This would provide a cleaner frequency and increase the dependability of the links. Eliminating the 5 GHz frequency as a backhaul would free up more 5 GHz spectrum with which to connect customer premise equipment; thereby increasing the number of customers which can be served from each Access Point on the towers. We also propose a redundant backhaul link to each tower in order to increase stability and dependability. Currently, we have each of our towers operating on DC current with the batteries being charged by the utility companies. During a power outage we are operational typically from 4 to 5 days using the fully charged batteries. However we would like to strengthen that aspect of our network by deploying backup generators at each tower location providing unlimited uptime during extended power outages during and after hurricanes.

Contemplated Service Offerings

Residential – Internet

2Mb X 2Mb - \$44.95 per month
3Mb X 3Mb - \$64.95 per month
4Mb X 4Mb - \$84.95 per month
5Mb X 5Mb – \$104.95 per month
Higher Speeds – to be determined

Business - Internet

2Mb X 2Mb - \$104.95 per month
3Mb X 3Mb - \$154.95 per month
4Mb X 4Mb - \$204.95 per month
5Mb X 5Mb - \$254.95 per month
10Mb X 10Mb - \$509.90 per month
20Mb X 20Mb - \$1,018.90 per month
Higher Speeds to be determined

Residential – Voice

\$30.00 per month (unlimited local and long distance)

Business - Voice

1st two DID's - \$40.00 each per month
Additional DID's - \$25.00 per month
(Unlimited local and long distance)

State and/or Local or Tribal Government Participation in and/or Support for Project

Our goal is to build a network which is stable and dependable enough to provide the municipal government entities with an interoperable system to connect all of these entities together in order to respond cohesively during natural disasters. We are located on the Gulf Coast and have frequent tropical storms and hurricanes. The Parish Government is watching with interest as we continue to develop the tools to obtain that goal. We currently serve several Water Districts with internet for placement on their water towers. We also are providing equipment and service to a Drainage District for video surveillance, access control, and water flow metrics sent back to the Director of Operation via the internet. It is the first fully automated flood control structure in St. Mary Parish. In addition, we have installed and support a WiFi Network serving Lake End Park a regional destination park for camping, RV's, fishing, swimming and boating which is owned by the City of Morgan City. St. Mary Parish is the home of the Sovereign Nation of the Chitimacha. We will be approaching them after we achieve the upgrades we are proposing in this letter of interest. You will see attached; letters of support from St. Mary Parish President Paul Naquin and Frank Fink, Director of Economic Development.

Project Time Line

The main portion of the upgrades to the network and infrastructure should be completed within one year of the commencement of the project.

Approximate Network Build Cost

Replacement Tower for Main Distribution Tower

375 foot Pirod Guyed Tower	\$49,500.00
Installation, Foundation, Comm Bldg.	<u>\$57,000.00</u>
TOTAL	\$106,500.00

Additional Towers for Comprehensive Coverage Parish-wide Rural Areas

(8) 150 foot Self Supporting Towers @ \$12,900.00	\$103,200.00
(8) Installation, Foundation, Comm Bldg. @ \$34,000.00	<u>\$272,000.00</u>
TOTAL	\$375,200.00

Back-up Generators for DC Powered Towers

(2) 25 kw Generac Standby Generators @ \$9,500.00 (Central Office and Main Distribution Tower)	\$19,000.00
(23) 7 kw Generac Off Grid Communication Generator @ \$2,000.00	\$46,000.00
(25) Installation @ \$2,500.00	\$62,500.00
(23) Propane Tanks @ \$1,000.00	<u>\$23,000.00</u>
TOTAL	\$150,500.00

Licensed Backhaul Equipment for 15 Towers

(providing redundancy and a link to two towers)

(60) PTP – 620 HP Ligo Radio 6 GHz (indoor unit) @ \$2,000.00	\$120,000.00
(60) PTP – 620 HP Ligo Radio 6 GHz (outdoor unit) @ \$2,000.00	\$120,000.00
(60) 250 foot Coax Cable @ \$5.00 per foot	\$ 75,000.00
(15) Installation @ \$2,500.00	<u>\$ 37,500.00</u>
TOTAL	\$352,500.00

One Time Capital Infrastructure Investment Needed: \$984,700.00

Gulf Coast Broadband is not requesting continuing funding.

Conclusion

On behalf of Gulf Coast Broadband, I would like to thank the FCC for giving us the opportunity to submit this experiment request. Our goals are to be partners in our Parish with government, industries, schools and citizens to improve the economy, public safety and enjoy the fruits of being connected. With these upgrades we will be able to fulfill our mission to our community.

Sincerely,

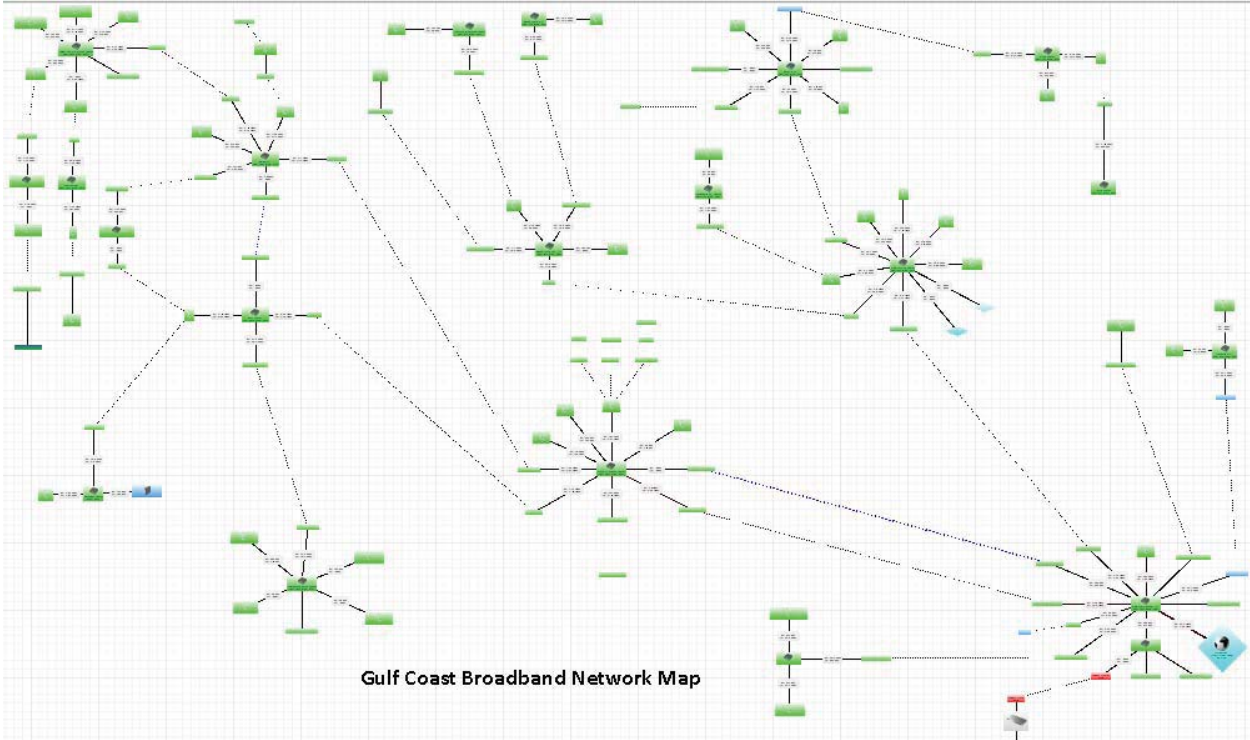
/s/ Edward Meyer

Edward Meyer
President
Gulf Coast Broadband

Gulf Coast Broadband Coverage Map for St. Mary Parish



Gulf Coast Broadband Network Map



ST. MARY PARISH GOVERNMENT

PAUL P. NAQUIN, JR., PRESIDENT

FIFTH FLOOR - COURTHOUSE
FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA 70538-6198

HENRY "BO" LAGRANGE
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
PAUL J. GOVERNALE, CPA, CGFM

DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL
DONNA L. McDONALD

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ZONING
TAMMY LUKE

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
GEORGE MIKHAEL, P.E., MSCE

DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
FRANK G. FINK

DIRECTOR OF HOMELAND SECURITY
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OFFICE HOURS
8:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M.
1:00 P.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

March 6, 2014

Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Letter of Support for Gulf Coast Broadband, LLC

The St. Mary Parish Government supports Gulf Coast Broadband, LLC expressions of interest for the FCC Connect America Fund initiative.

Gulf Coast Broadband has a long standing commitment to improve telecommunications, internet service and TV offerings to St. Mary Parish (surrounding Louisiana Parishes) citizens. Their technical expertise and customer service has propelled them to a leading position in the local telecom markets.

St. Mary Parish along with many other rural Louisiana Parishes has suffered a deficit in broadband services and penetration for decades. A program offering financial support to modern tech companies such as Gulf Coast Broadband is a real "home run" for the underserved rural population.

We whole heartily support their application to the FCC and will be proactive in assisting them with expedited permitting, rights of way acquisition and inspection services to efficiently deploy their fixed wireless network should they be awarded a FCC grant.

Please contact me should you need any additional information on this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Paul P. Naquin, Jr.
President
St. Mary Parish
pnaquin@stmaryparishla.gov
(337) 828-4100

PPN/rml

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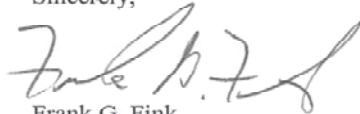
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St. Mary Parish Government
Director of Economic Development
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FGF/rml